



Workers Defense Action Fund

Build a Better Texas Legislative Priorities 2019

PROPOSALS TO STOP WAGE THEFT AND RETALIATION

One in five construction workers has experienced wage theft. Seventy-one percent of construction workers who experienced wage theft report that they are unable to meet the basic needs of their families.¹ Responsible businesses who properly pay their workers' wages get underbid by companies who lower costs by cheating workers out of wages. In fiscal year 2017 employers had over six million dollars in outstanding wage claims filed with the Texas Workforce Commission.

Under current Texas law, there are no consequences for employers who retaliate against their employees. Of workers who took action to recover their unpaid wages, one of three report suffering retaliation from their employers, including threats, dismissal, pay cuts, reduced hours, or being assigned more difficult work tasks.²

REQUIRE CONSTRUCTION EMPLOYERS TO PROVIDE WORKERS' COMPENSATION INSURANCE COVERAGE

Legislation that increases coverage of employees on the job, either through mandatory workers' compensation for construction workers, should be a top priority for this legislature as Texas remains the most dangerous state in the country to work in construction. Under current law, companies can opt-out of covering their employees through workers' compensation or other insurance. This creates a liability for the state and its taxpayers when uncovered workers are injured on the job.

LEGISLATION THAT PREVENTS PAYROLL FRAUD.

Over forty percent of construction workers report that their employer misclassified them as an independent contractor in order to get out of paying taxes.³ Texas should create stronger penalties and deterrents for all employers who commit payroll fraud, to level the playing field for law-abiding companies.

WORKING TEXANS SHOULD HAVE THE ABILITY TO EARN PAID SICK TIME

Approximately 40 percent of workers in Texas lack paid sick time. Low-income and part-time workers are especially unlikely to work for employers that provide paid sick time.⁴ Increasingly, local communities in Texas are trying to change these statistics by joining the forty four other cities, counties, and states that have passed laws to ensure workers have the right to earn paid sick time. Earned sick time policies benefit families, businesses, public health, and the local economy.

SUPPORTING IMMIGRANTS IS SUPPORTING TEXAS

Immigrant families are integral to the fabric Texas' diverse communities, and the strength of Texas' economy. Workers Defense supports legislation to repeal certain provisions governing state and local enforcement of immigration laws and other provisions related to immigration law. Anti-immigrant policies are detrimental to public safety and the well-being of Texas families.

¹ Price, Amy, et al. *Build a Better Texas: Construction Working Conditions in the Lone Star State*. University of Texas and Workers Defense Project. All statistics are from Price et al, unless otherwise noted.

² Price, Amy, et al. *Build a Better Texas: Construction Working Conditions in the Lone Star State*. University of Texas and Workers Defense Project. All statistics are from Price et al, unless otherwise noted.

³ Price, Amy, et al. *Build a Better Texas: Construction Working Conditions in the Lone Star State*. University of Texas and Workers Defense Project. All statistics are from Price et al, unless otherwise noted.

⁴ Institute for Women's Policy Research. "Access to Paid Sick Time in Texas" <https://iwpr.org/publications/access-paid-sick-time-texas/>